Folklores of Pakistan collection

THE TALE OF Saif ul Malook

Illustrated by Saba Arshad

READINGS CLASSICS

Folklores of Pakistan collection

THE TALE OF Saif ul Malook

Illustrated by Saba Arshad

READINGS CLASSICS

Story Copyright © Manal A. Khan and Windswept Words, 2018

This Edition 2017 in Pakistan by
Readings

Readings is a subsidiary of
Elan Vital Private Ltd.

All rights reserved.
No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

International Standard Book Number (ISBN)
978-012 3456-78-9

Cover Design: Saba Arshad
Illustrations: Saba Arshad

Printed in Pakistan

12-K, Main Boulevard, Gulberg 2
Lahore 54660
Pakistan
Contact: 92 42 3575 7877
Fax: 92 42 3575 5576
www.readings.com.pk

Acknowlegdement

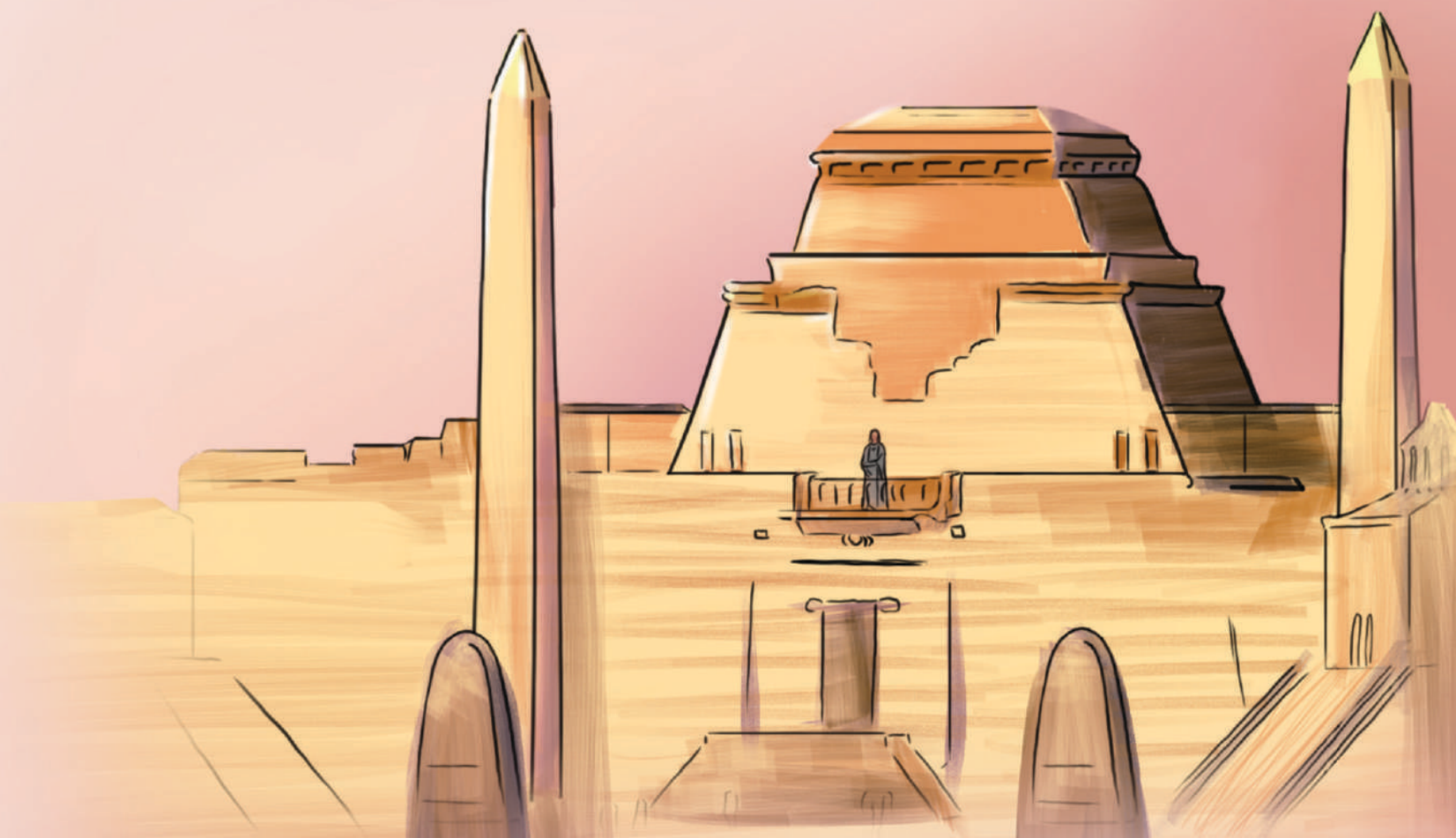
I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following individuals and organizations whose support and encouragement made this book possible:
Thank you for your unwavering belief in this project and for your constant encouragement. Your valuable feedback and creative input greatly contributed to shaping this story. Your support during the writing process was invaluable, and I appreciate your patience. I am grateful for your help with research and for sharing your expertise in [relevant subject].
I extend my thanks to Readings for their support in bringing this book to life. Your enthusiasm and dedication to storytelling have been an inspiration to me. Your friendship and support have meant the world to me throughout this journey.

To all my friends, family, and readers who have shown interest in this story, thank you for joining me on this adventure.

This book would not have been possible without your kindness and encouragement.

Once upon a time, there lived in Egypt a prince called Saif. They say that Saif was a handsome man - tall and lean, with skin the colour of gleaming copper, a clear, noble brow, deep-set dark eyes and black hair that fell in waves to his shoulders. He was brave, a skilled hunter, rider and swordsman, true to his Arabic name - “Sword of the Kings". Born to riches, Prince Saif had never wanted for anything in his life; there was not a stone, river, man or woman in the kingdom that he could not claim.

Until one night, he had a dream.



He dreamt of a lake, a lake he had never seen before, surrounded by mountains that seemed to touch the sky and water that shimmered in the moonlight.

In the lake seven fairies were bathing – ethereal creatures, slim as gazelles, with creamy skins, wide, golden eyes, and hair like rippling water – but the seventh among them eclipsed them all in beauty.

Her face was as radiant as the full moon, badr, but it was when she laughed, skipping on the water without a care in the world – it was when she laughed that Saif was seized by a joy and a sadness so intense, so inexpressible, that he awoke from his sleep with tears in his eyes.

Badr-ul-Jamal...he had never seen anything more beautiful.

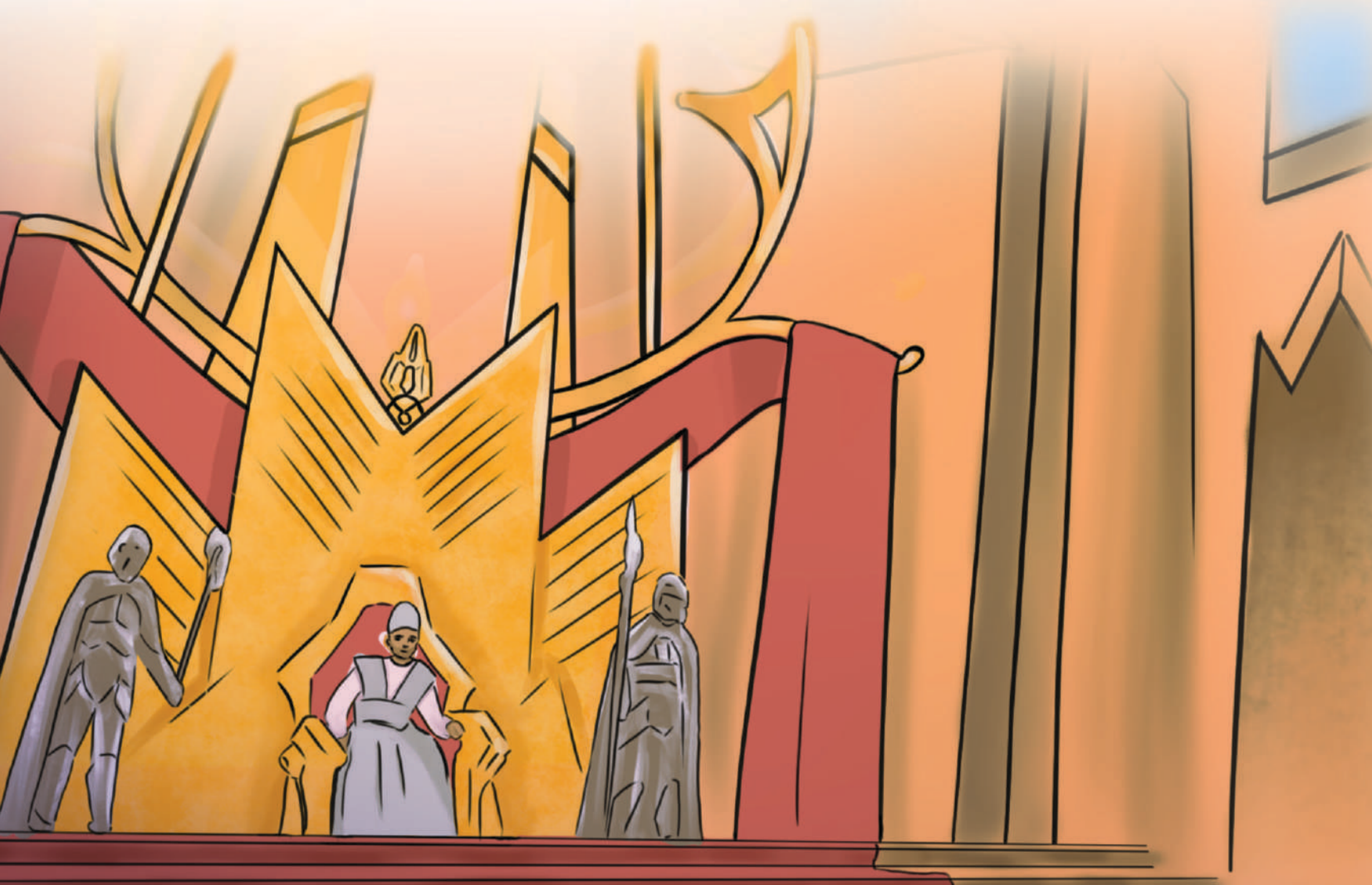
The next morning, Saif was visibly troubled.

"Why so dispirited, son?" asked the king, his father, at breakfast.

"Father," the young man confided. "I think I am in love."

The king was overjoyed. "What happy news, son! This calls for a wedding! Who is the favoured princess?"

"No princess, father," Saif replied grimly; then, with a sudden burst of elation: "She is a Queen...A Queen among fairies!"



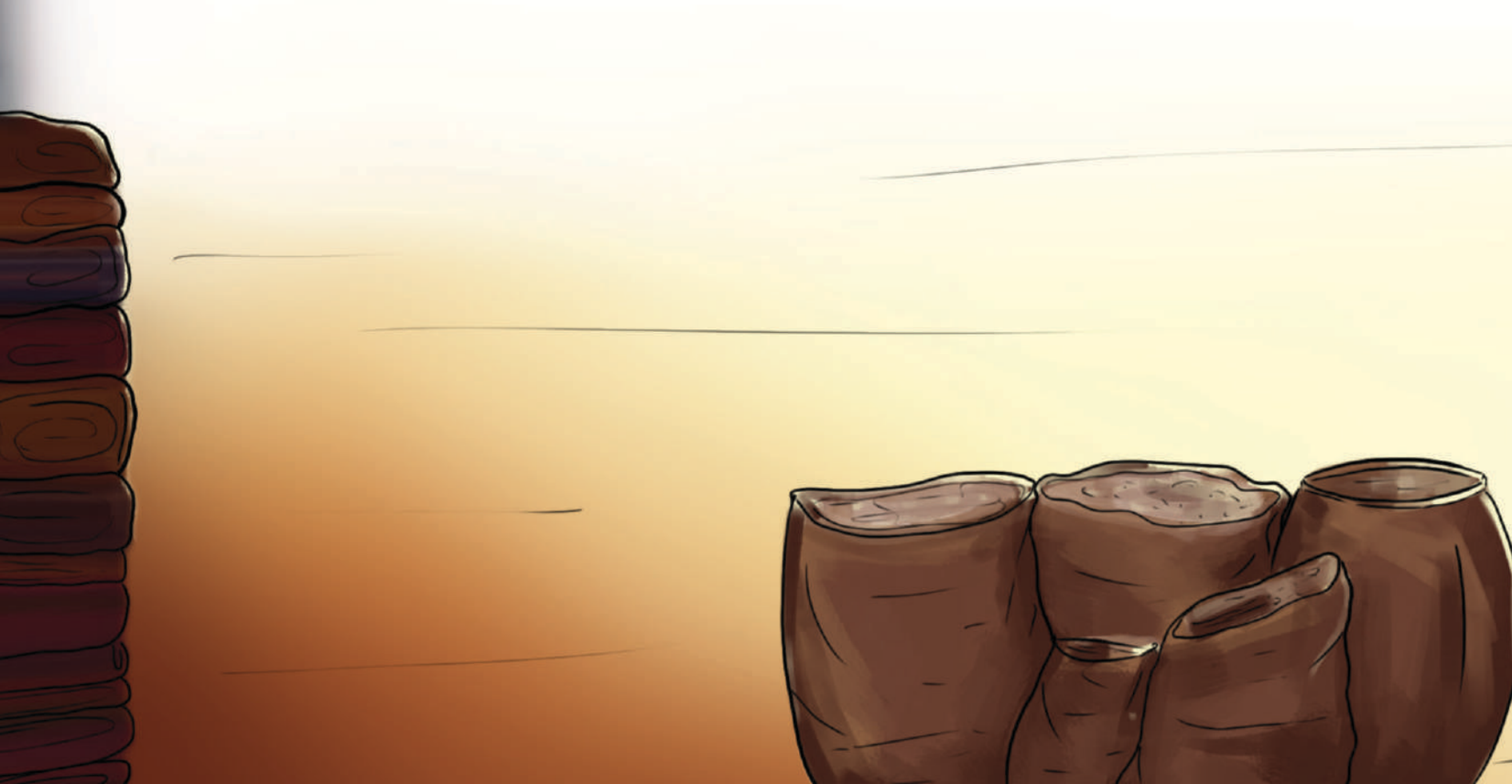
The king's face furrowed into a frown. "Saif, do you realise what you are saying? A fairy! She is a creature cast of fire, naari. So how can a human being, an earthbound mortal like you, ever hope to possess her?" He shook his head vehemently. "It is impossible. Abandon the idea at once. It will bring you nothing but misery," he foresaw.

But it was no use. Saif begged his father's permission to set out and look for that magical lake where the fairies bathed, in the hopes of finding their Queen. With a heavy heart, the king consented, blessed him on his quest, and watched his only son ride away into the desert.

For six long years Prince Saif searched, roaming every corner of Egypt, from Alexandria to Sinai. Begging on the streets, his hair in his eyes, his shoes in shreds, consumed by love, people no longer recognized him.

One day, as he wandered about the outskirts of Cairo, Saif saw a holy man, a buzurg, sitting under the shade of a lone olive tree.

“Perhaps this holy man can help me,” Saif thought.



As he approached him, the old man looked up expectantly.
"Ah, there you are," the old man said, a smile playing on his lips.

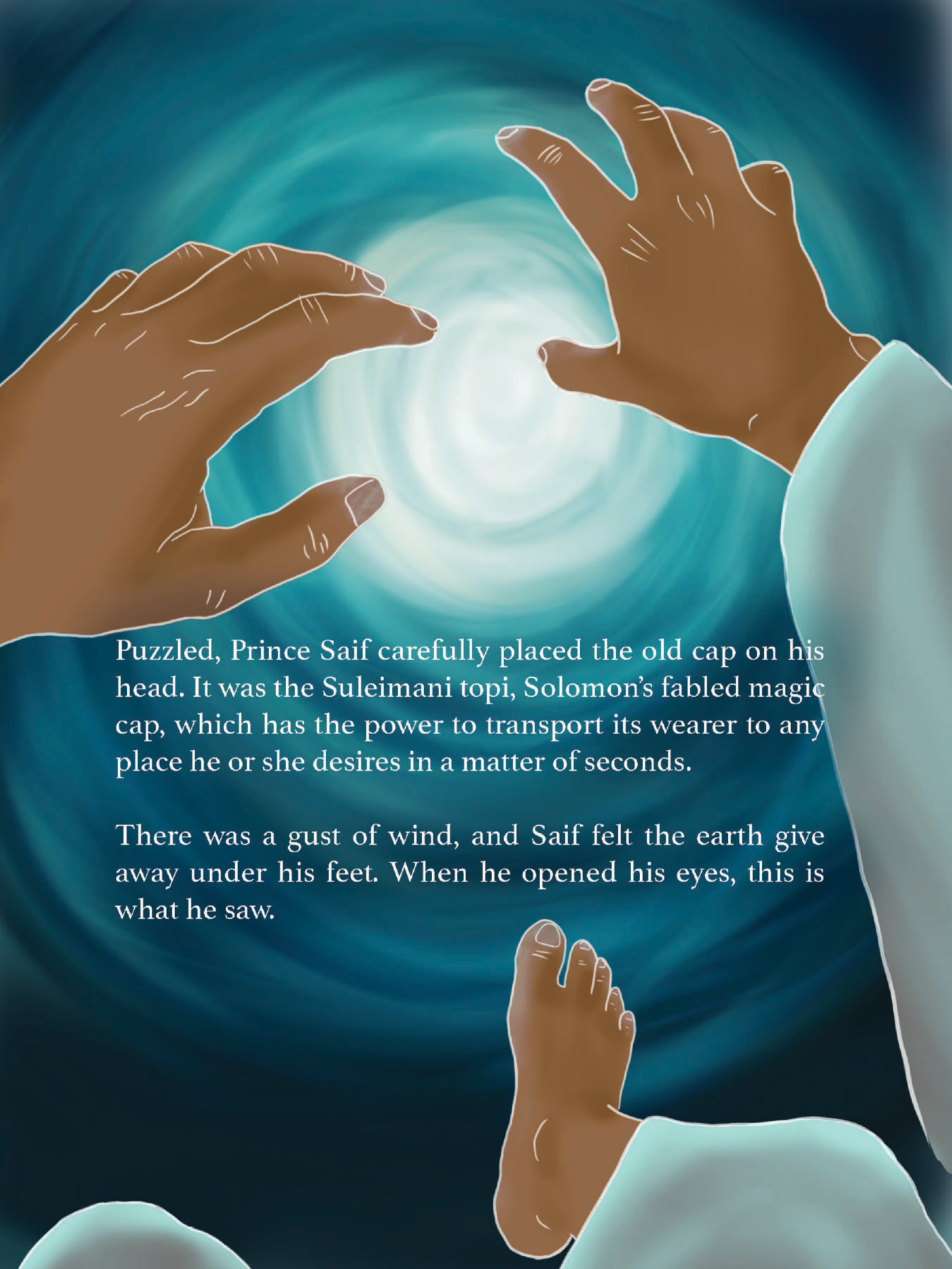
"I've been waiting for you, Prince Saif."

No one had addressed him as prince in years. The buzurg dug a hand into the bountiful folds of his cloak and produced an old, battered round cap, frayed and thinned with what seemed like centuries of use.

Placing it in Saif's hands, the holy man said, looking at him with keen eyes, "You have been through a lot, my son. But the important thing is that you don't give up – nothing valuable is won without a struggle."

Saif toyed with the cap in his hands. "Thank you," he said hesitatingly. "But what am I supposed to do with this?"

The old man chuckled. "Why, what do you think? Put it on!"



Puzzled, Prince Saif carefully placed the old cap on his head. It was the Suleimani topi, Solomon's fabled magic cap, which has the power to transport its wearer to any place he or she desires in a matter of seconds.

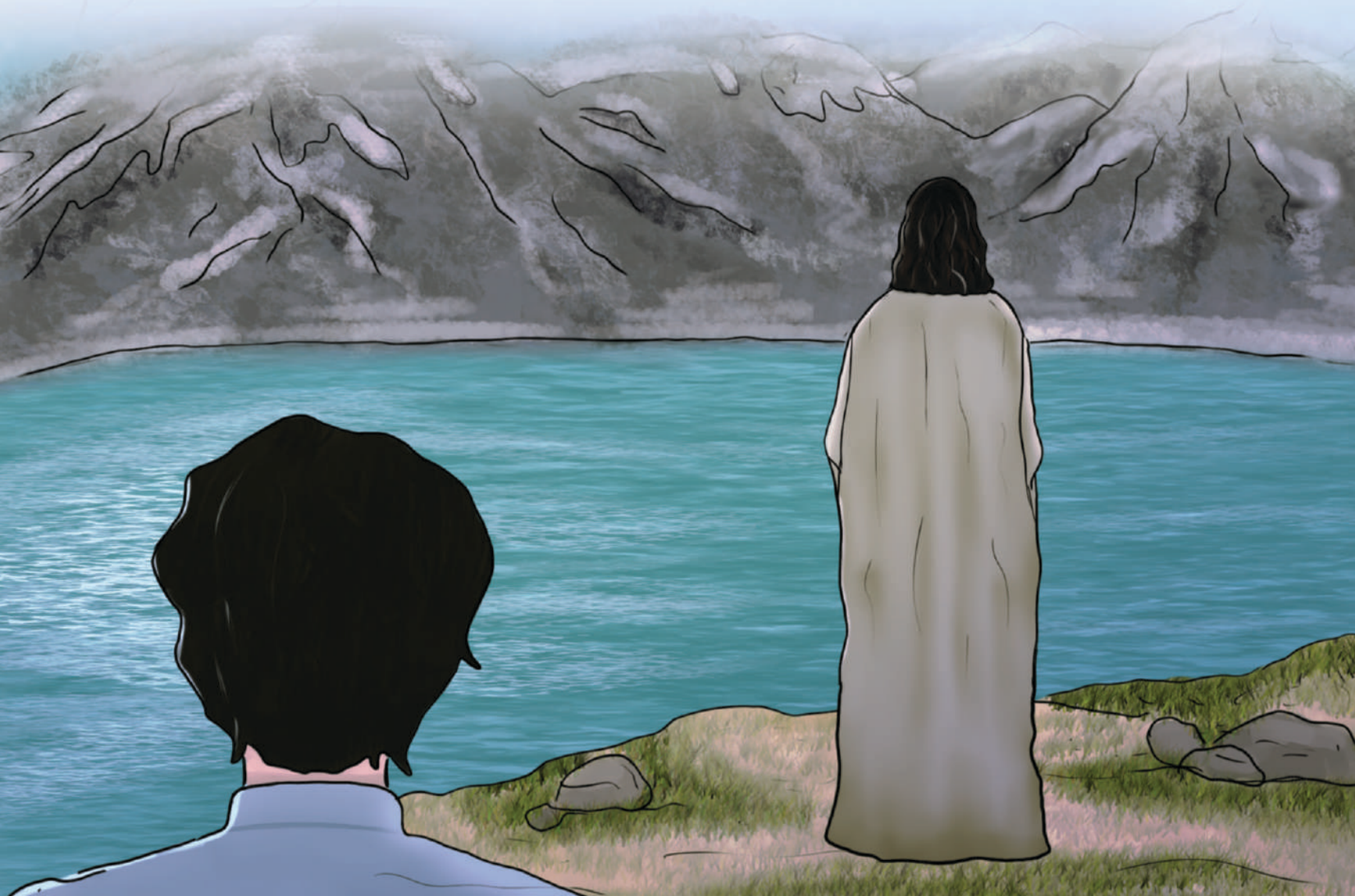
There was a gust of wind, and Saif felt the earth give away under his feet. When he opened his eyes, this is what he saw.

It was the Lake – emerald-green, calm as a mirror – the very one from his dream. Saif's joy was uncontrollable. In his excitement, he had forgotten about how he had been transported to the Lake – courtesy the jinn of Solomon's cap, who was at this moment standing behind him in human form.

The jinn cleared his throat. "Ahem, Prince Saif...there is one thing."

"What...?" Saif said slowly, peering at the jinn.

"You will not be able to see the Fairy Queen. She is, like us, naari, born of fire, hence invisible to the human eye in her true form."



"So, what must I do to see her?" Saif asked impatiently.

"You may pray," the jinn replied. "Pray for forty consecutive days – the chilla – without food, drink or sleep, without moving from the circle wherein you sit. Then, and only then, will you be able to see the Fairy Badr Jamal." With these sombre words, the jinn vanished.

It sounded impossible. But Saif was not about to be thwarted from his objective so close to the end.

"I've looked for her for six years, wandering the streets of Egypt with nothing but a kashkol, a begging bowl. Surely I can endure another forty days?"

So, drawing a circle of pebbles on the southern shore of the Lake, he seated himself inside, closed his eyes, and began to pray.

He prayed, and prayed, and prayed, and as the suns went down and the moons came up, Saif grew a little weaker, his face thinner, his pain stronger, his yearning deeper. He lost count of the days, and awaited each night with hope.

But Badr Jamal did not appear.

One night, as the sun cast its dying amber rays on the Himalayan slopes and twilight crept into the sky, Prince Saif sat in his circle wondering if he would live to see another day.

It was also a chaudhvin ki raat – the 14th of the lunar month, or night of a full moon. The sight of that perfect silver orb glowing in the dark velvety sky, enveloping the Lake, the mountains and the Prince himself in its ethereal light, filled Saif's heart with peace.

Suddenly, a sound reached his ears – like the fluttering of a great flock of birds, far away at first, then closer – intermingled with a delicate tinkling, like the chime of a thousand tiny bells. Saif looked up; a great white cloud was moving from the west towards the Lake.

"Perhaps it's the Angels of Death, come to take me home!" Saif thought.

The white cloud slowly descended at the shore of the Lake, and seven forms emerged – seven beautiful creatures, fair-limbed, golden-eyed, with large silky wings on their backs that glittered in the moonlight. Saif was in awe. His mouth agape with wonder, he watched as the seven Fairies laughingly removed their wings, folded them neatly on ground, and dived into the deep, shimmering waters of the Lake.

And then he saw her – Badr Jamal. She was the last to enter the Lake, gliding through the water with her long hair spread out behind her, her face radiant as the full moon, her eyes twinkling like a child's.

We don't know how long Saif stayed behind that boulder, guiltily spying on the fairies; for him, it was only a few minutes before the fairies began to emerge from the water and don their wings. They were getting ready to leave! Panicking, he summoned the jinn of the Suleimani cap.

"Friend, what shall I do?" he implored the jinn. "How do I stop her from leaving?"

The jinn nodded his head and said in reassuring tones, "Worry not, master. Leave it to me."

Unseen to Prince Saif and the fairies, the jinn stealthily crept up to the spot where the fairies had placed their folded wings and whisked away the largest, most shimmery pair of them all – Badr Jamal's. Soon, Badr Jamal arose from the depths, the last of the group, to prepare herself for the return journey.

"Has anyone seen my wings?" she asked after a few moments, looking around anxiously.

"You put them right here, next to mine," said one of her friends, pointing to a large rock by the shore.

"They're gone! My wings are gone!" Badr Jamal was in utter distress. "Oh, what will I do? How will I fly back to Koh Kaaf? What will he say?"

Her friends were ready to leave. What would he say indeed! It was past midnight, and they were already late. He would be in a foul mood, heavily pacing the corridors of the castle, a scowl on his gigantic face, thundering like a black cloud – their master Deo Safed, the White Ogre. They had to go back, now.

Glancing at each other nervously, the fairies whispered, "There's some mischief afoot here, surely. We best be on our way, lest we are all trapped."

While Badr was still frantically searching for her wings, her back towards them, the fairies abruptly took flight, and in one unanimous flutter, they were gone.

"My friends, don't leave me here alone!" Badr Jamal cried, her hands imploring the sky. But there was nothing there. She was alone.

The Fairy Queen sunk down to the ground, face buried in her hands. How cold she felt, suddenly!

All at once, she heard a sound – a shuffling of feet. She looked up, alert. It was Prince Saif. Standing right before her.

"You..." she said slowly, staring at him with her wide golden eyes. "You..."

"Please, don't be afraid," he spoke hurriedly, gently advancing towards her. "I'm not going to hurt you. It was I who stole your wings, but please, let me explain..."

And the whole story came tumbling out – the dream, the old buzurg, his father the king, the Suleimani topi, the six year-long quest that had brought him from Egypt to the Himalayas.

He didn't dare look at Badr Jamal in the face, for he was weak from his penance, the chilla, and would not be able to stand the splendour of her beauty.

She was still staring at him, a look of disbelief on her lovely face. Finally, she spoke:
"Prince Saif, you were not the only one who dreamt a dream."

Saif glanced up in astonishment, and their eyes met for the first time. Badr Jamal smiled. "I never thought I'd see you. I didn't think you were real..."

A moment later Badr was in his arms. Words cannot describe the joy and the peace that flooded over them as they embraced each other.

"My sweet love, after all these years..." Saif whispered as he stroked Badr's hair, holding her tightly. "We can finally be together!"

Badr Jamal suddenly drew back, as if she had just remembered something. "What's the matter, my love?" Saif asked with concern.

She looked at him with a certain decisiveness, a certain resignation. "No. I can't stay here. I must go. I love you, Prince Saif, but I must go. Please return my wings. I will try to come back. But right now, I must return to Koh Kaaf."

"Let you go?" Prince Saif repeated, his voice hollow. He grabbed her wrist. "You think I would do that? After begging, searching, praying, struggling for so long? That I would give you up?" With a strange, violent laugh, he shouted to the sky, "Never!"

"But you don't understand!" Badr Jamal fell to her knees, distraught. "He'll kill us, he'll kill us both! My master, Deo Safed. When my friends return and he finds me missing, he will come looking for me. He's very powerful! And when he sees us together, he will kill us both. Instantly."

Prince Saif took Badr by the shoulders.

"Let him come," he announced. "I am not afraid of him. Let him do what he dares. I am never parting with you."

He held her close, his face resolute, his heart beating with terror at what was to follow.

Covering Badr Jamal in his cloak, Prince Saif fled with her down the Valley. There, in a graveyard at the edge of the town of Naran, among shadows and silent tombstones, the couple hid for the night.

Meanwhile, 1, 600 miles away, in his castle in the Caucasus Mountains of present-day Turkey, Deo Safed was in a rage.

"Where is Badr Jamal?" he bellowed. "Where is she?"

The six fairies huddled together in fear. "We don't know, master," one of them ventured, her voice trembling. "When we came out of the water from our bath, she wasn't there." They could not tell him they had left her there, unprotected, vulnerable. He would kill them.

He was a frightful creature, Deo Safed – tall as a mountain, white all over like snow, and the earth shuddered when he walked.

"Well, we'll soon find out!" He stormed out of the palace, club in hand, heading east to the Himalayas.

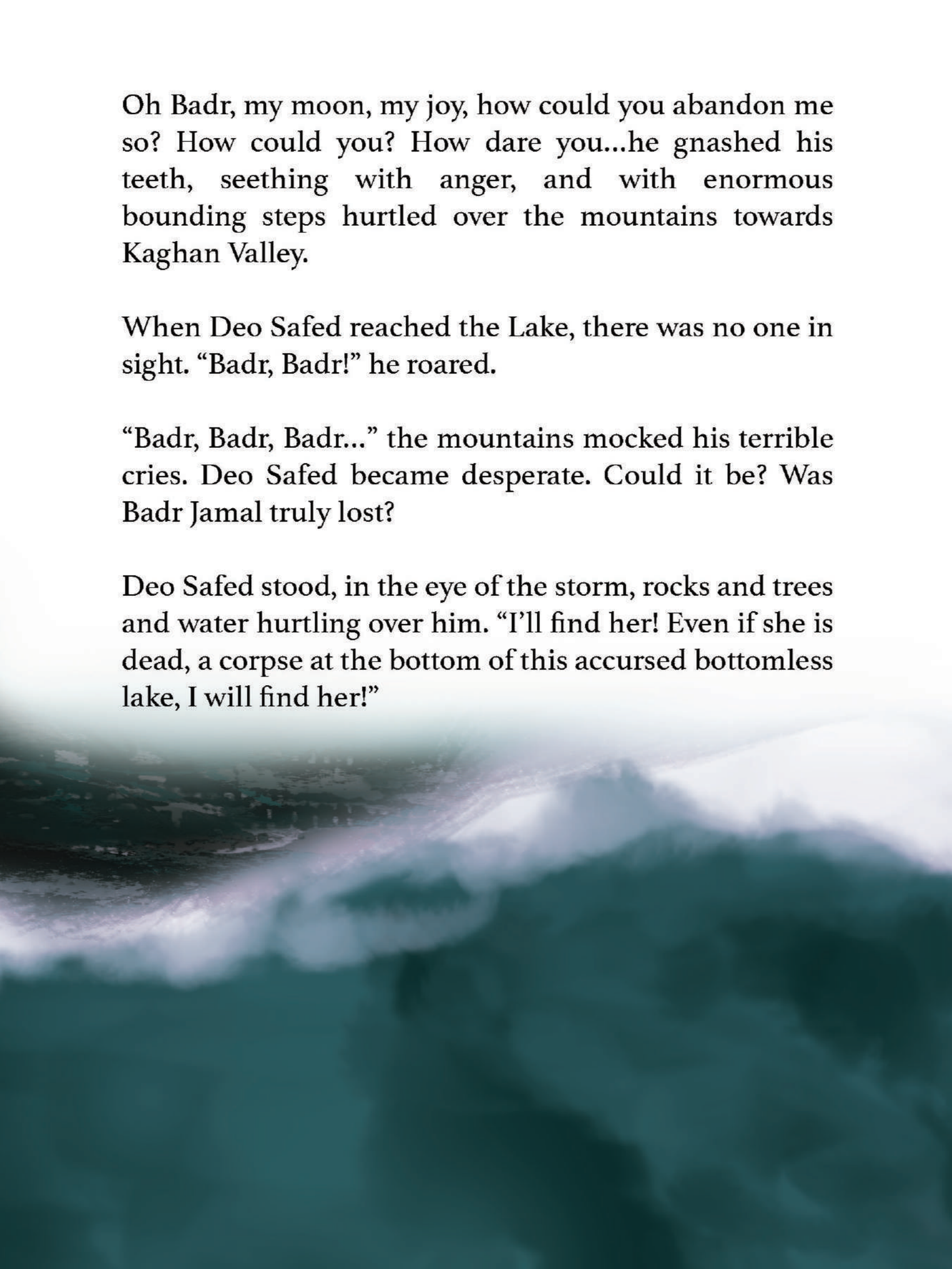
Deo Safed adored Badr Jamal. He didn't care about the others – she was special. He would never have let her out of his sight if he had had his way; but how could he refuse her the simple pleasure of bathing with her friends at her favourite lake twice a month?

Oh Badr, my moon, my joy, how could you abandon me so? How could you? How dare you...he gnashed his teeth, seething with anger, and with enormous bounding steps hurtled over the mountains towards Kaghan Valley.

When Deo Safed reached the Lake, there was no one in sight. "Badr, Badr!" he roared.

"Badr, Badr, Badr..." the mountains mocked his terrible cries. Deo Safed became desperate. Could it be? Was Badr Jamal truly lost?

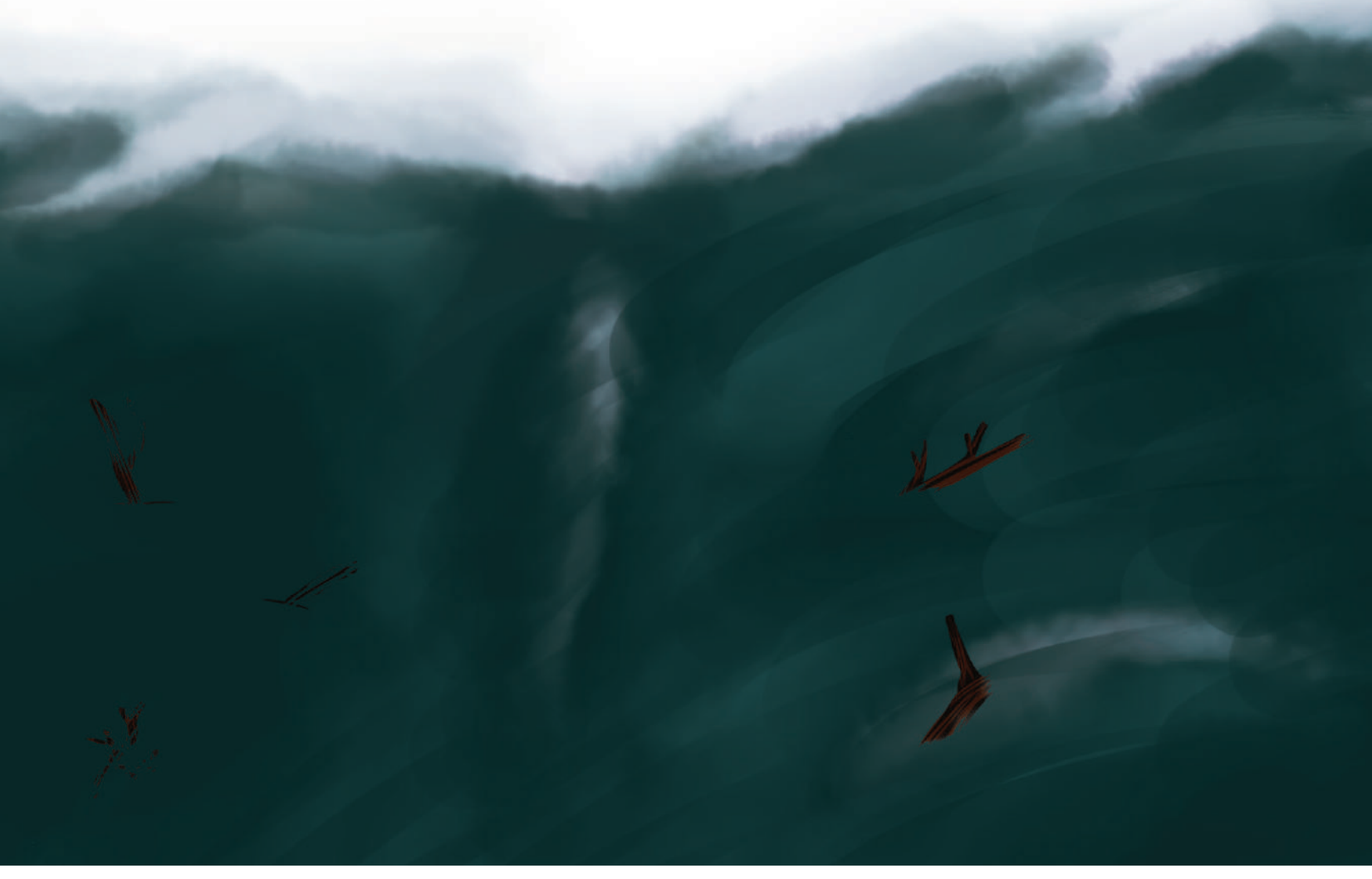
Deo Safed stood, in the eye of the storm, rocks and trees and water hurtling over him. "I'll find her! Even if she is dead, a corpse at the bottom of this accursed bottomless lake, I will find her!"



Meanwhile, in the little cemetery on the outskirts of Naran town, Prince Saif and Badr Jamal had just fallen asleep under the shelter of a beautiful old deodar tree.

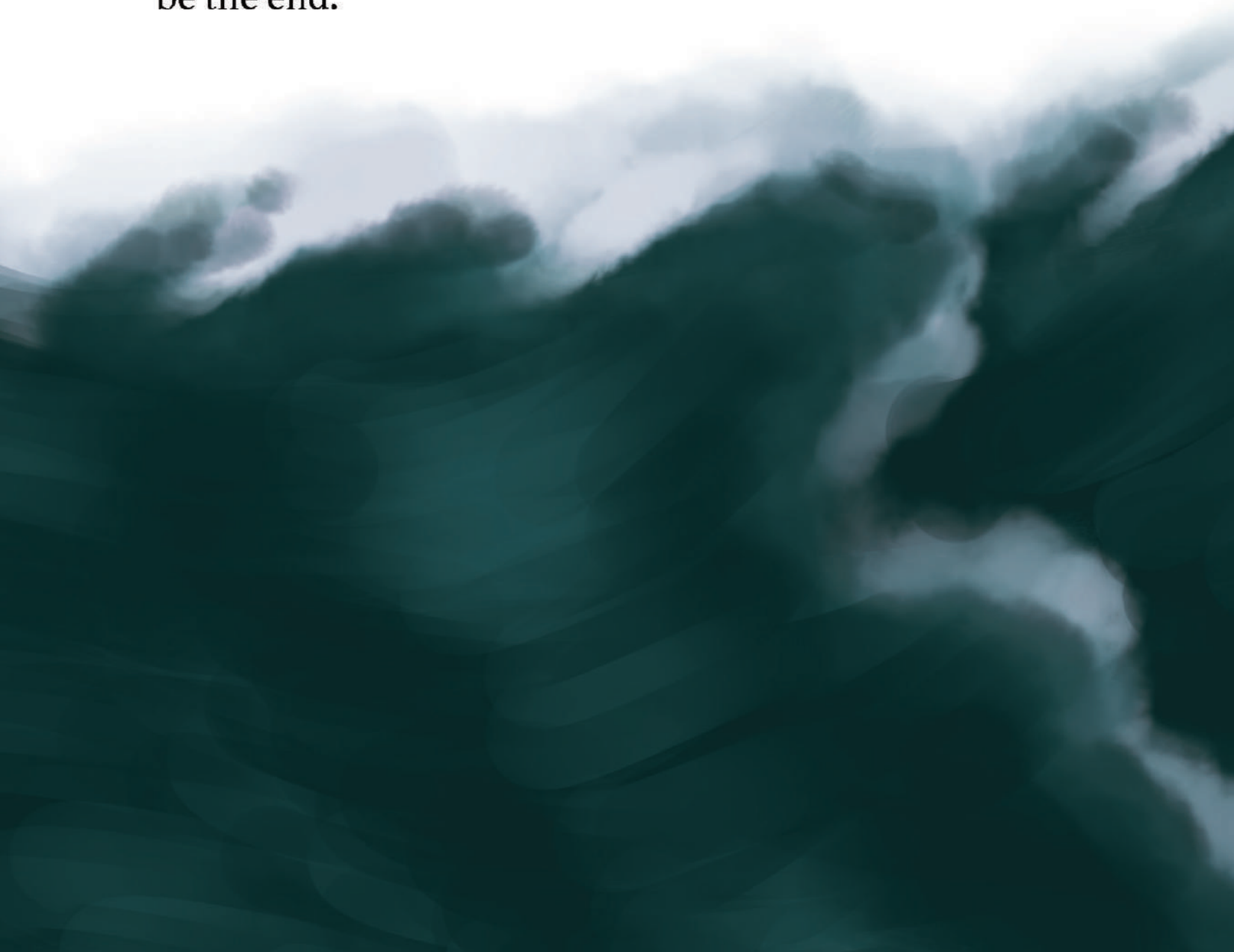
Suddenly, a tremendous thundering reached their ears, mingled with a hideous, inhuman wailing.
"He's here!" Badr gasped, jolting out of her slumber. Her face turned pale.

For ten long years, Badr Jamal had been a slave, a prisoner of this monster, Deo Safed. For ten long years, she had not known family, or friendship, or love – only fear, and whispers, and unspoken dreams, the charade of loving a creature whom she revealed from the depths of her heart. He had tried to win her love.



But Badr Jamal was not free. And there was no pleasure in anything, not priceless jewels or the choicest morsel of food, if she was not free. Now, this moment was the closest chance she had ever had of escape, a true escape. And yet, anything could happen. She held close to Saif.

Then they saw, in the distance, coming from the direction of Malika Parbat above, the Flood. It was rushing towards them with lightning speed, tearing out trees, submerging sleeping villages, annihilating everything and creatures that lay in its wake. In a matter of seconds, it would reach the cemetery. And that would be the end.



Saif looked at Badr Jamal, and said, shouting over the deafening roar,

"This is it, my love. Tonight, we die, or we live. All we can do is pray. So pray with me!"

Badr nodded, her face resolute, surrendering finally to whatever Fate had in store.

Saif prayed to God, and Badr to her gods, each with equal fervour. The roar of the flood was getting closer, and closer, until it seemed like it was over their heads, then below them, then all around.

"So this is what death feels like," thought Saif. "Not as painful as I'd imagined."

But he wasn't dead. He could still feel Badr's warm hand clasped tightly around him. He opened his eyes.

Saif and Badr were standing in a cave, dry as leaves. At Saif's feet lay the Suleimani cap, which he thought he had forgotten at the Lake and despaired of ever finding.

"How?...."

Saif's voice trailed off as he stared at Badr, then at the cap, then around him at the cave.

"Where are we?" Badr looked around in amazement. "How did we get here?"

The cave was wide and airy, with a deceptively low mouth, so that they had to crawl to get out. Once outside, they saw that they were perched on a mountain high above the cemetery, which was by now completely swamped. Tombstones, rocks and fallen trees floated around in grim silence. The Flood had passed. They were alive. They were safe. God, and the gods, had listened.

But what about Deo Safed? Where was he, the great White Ogre whose fury had precipitated a Flood?

He wasn't at the Lake anymore. He wasn't even in Kaghan Valley. No, he was well on his way to his final resting place – Deosai, Land of the Giants, in Baltistan, where all giants were born, and where each one of them went to die.

For Deo Safed had lost the will to live. Badr Jamal hadn't drowned in the Lake. She had run away. Run away from him.

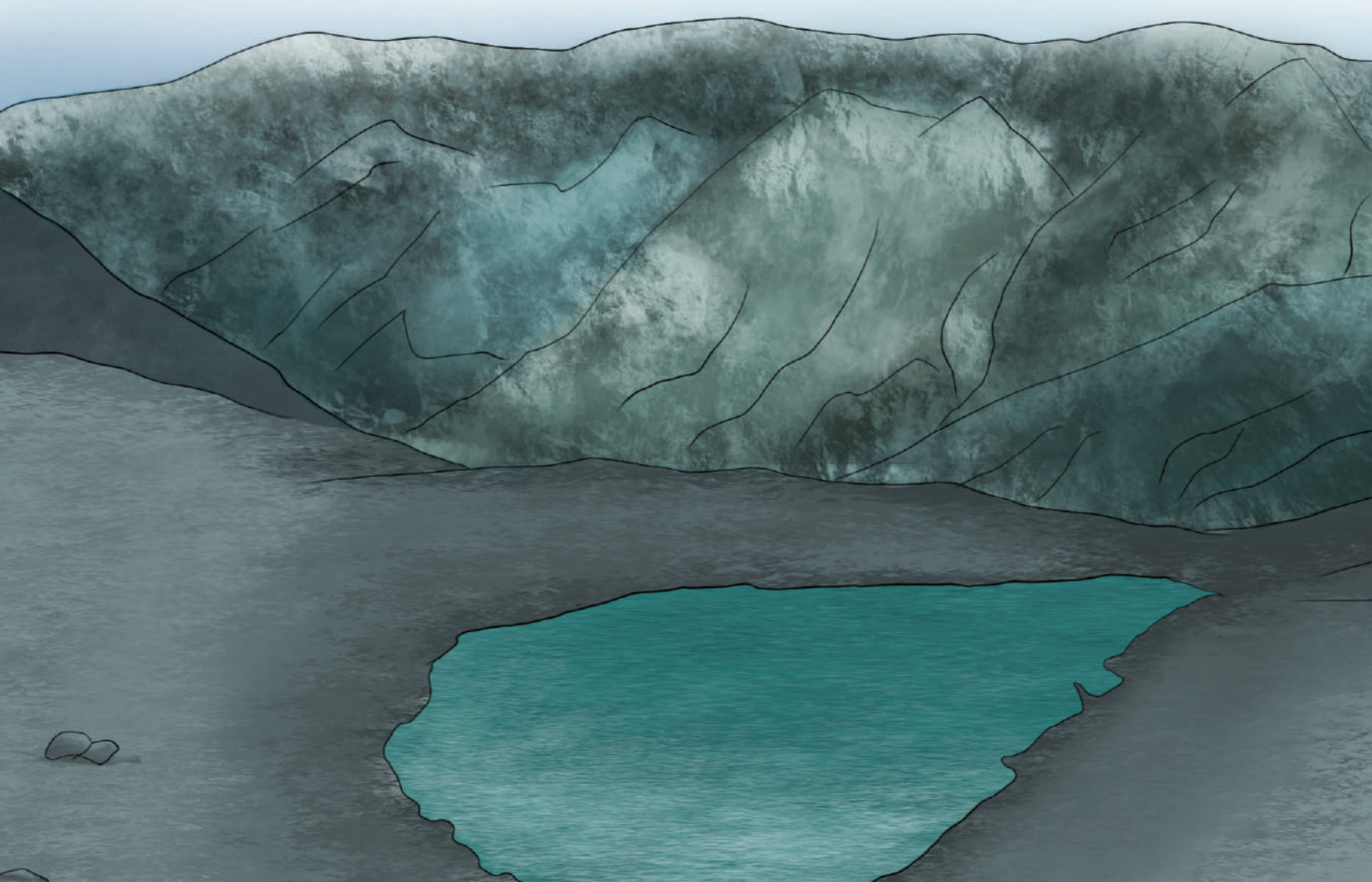
All these years, he had believed, he had convinced himself that she loved him. That she returned, to some degree, his ardent adoration for her.

The truth was, he couldn't live without her; nor could he live with the knowledge that she had betrayed him. He had lost. He was defeated, broken.

In Deosai there was peace. There, in between two of the greatest mountain ranges in the world, the Himalayas and the Karakoram, in the vast, unending plains of his birth, he went, lay down, and died.

His massive body crumbled, killed by unhappiness, till there was nothing left but a mound of earth, and slowly, nothing at all.

He wept the whole way there, and his large, heavy teardrops trickled down the slopes in sad streams, accumulating at a meadow in Kaghan Valley to form Ansoo Lake – "Teardrop Lake" – a lasting memorial to his undying love for Badr Jamal.



Back in Naran, Prince Saif and Badr Jamal were in ecstasy. They couldn't believe that the struggle was over, that they had survived, that Saif's quest was complete, that Badr was free, that they were together.

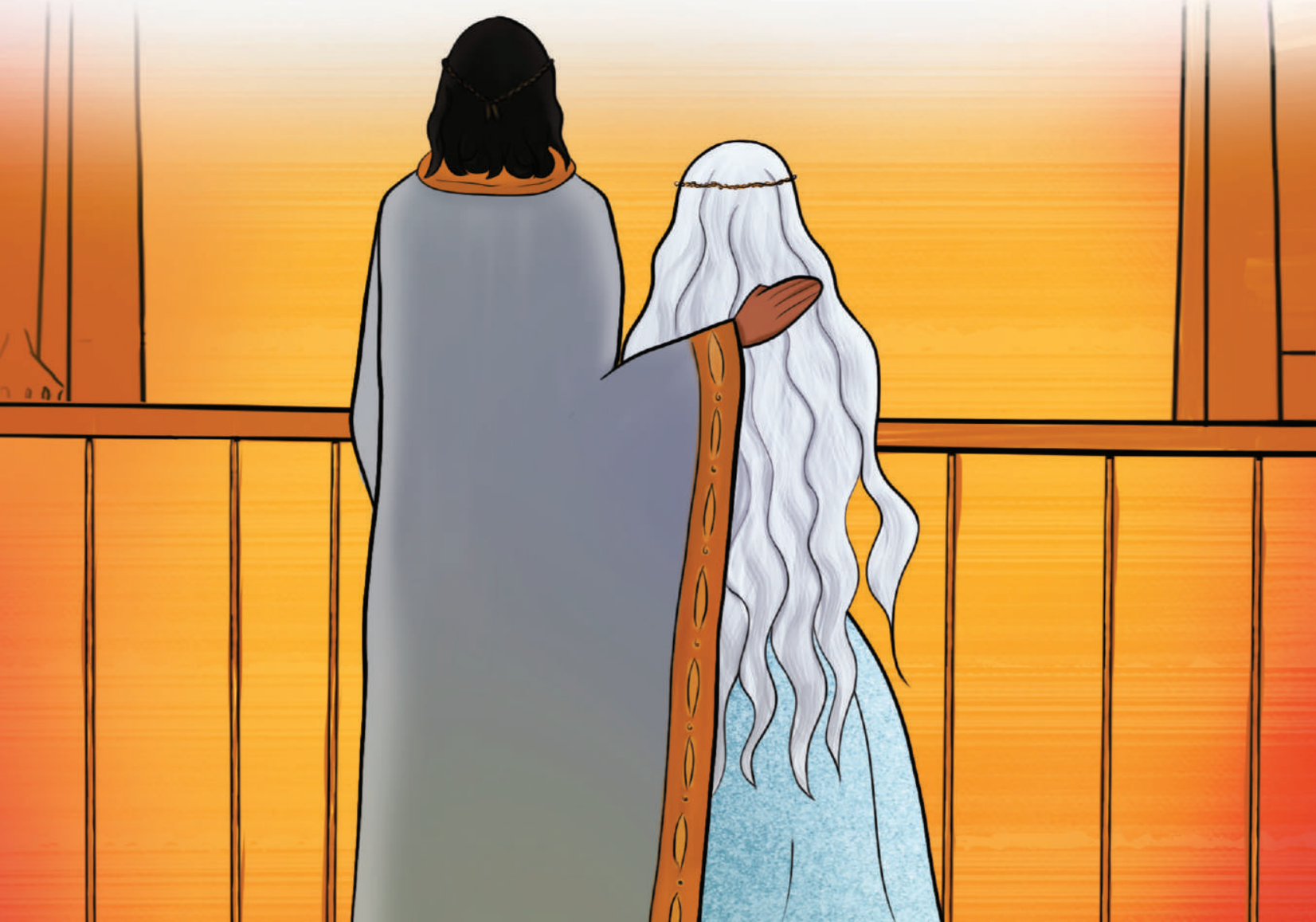
Taking the beautiful fairy's hand, Saif looked into her luminous, moonlike face, and smiled, "Let's go home, my Queen".

He summoned his trusty friend, the jinn of the Suleimani cap, and in the twinkling of an eye, the couple was 2, 500 miles away, at the gates of Prince Saif's palace in Egypt.

The news of the Prince's return after almost seven years, and that too, with a bride, was the cause of much celebration throughout the kingdom. The King and Queen, Prince Saif's parents, were beside themselves with joy, and wedding preparations were underway immediately.

Soon, the couple were married, in a spectacular, sumptuous ceremony, with feasting and festivities lasting for many day and lived a happy long life.

It is said that the prince and the fairy still live and come to the lake's surface on the 14th night of every lunar month.



Thank you for reading the first book of the collection **Folklores Of Pakistan.** Please look forward to the rest of the books from this collection. Details for the next chapter will be shared on the link below.

Saif-ul-Malook is an epic love story from the region of Kaghan Valley that revolves around the love between a prince named Saif-ul-Malook and a fairy princess named Badi-ul-Jamal.

Prince Saif-ul-Malook dreaming about a beautiful fairy princess and embarks on a perilous journey that takes him through various challenges, including encounters with magical creatures and a treacherous ogre named Deo Safed. Their love story unfolds, and they face further trials together. The story is not just a tale of love but also contains moral and spiritual lessons.

0 36000 29145 2

READINGS